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ORIGINAL LETTERS

WRITTEN BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN FLETCHER,

Vicar of Madely, Shropshire.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

HEADS OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH, Heb. XI. 4.

THE LIFE OF THE RIGHTEOUS FEED MANY, Prov. X. 10.

*They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,
Warm from the Soul, and faithful to its fires.*

POPE.

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Price 1s. 6d.

ORIGINAL LETTERS

FROM JOHN FLETCHER

TO THE EDITOR

OF THE LANCET



L E T T E R S
OF THE LATE
Rev. Mr. FLETCHER.

L E T T E R I.

To the Rev. Mr. J. W E S L E Y.

(*Asking Advice concerning his entering into Holy Orders.*)

Nov. 24, 1756.

Rev. Sir,

AS I look on you as my spiritual Guide, and cannot doubt of your patience to hear, and your experience to answer a serious question proposed by any of your people, I freely lay my case before you. Since the first time I began to feel the love of God shed abroad in my heart, which was, I think, when seven years of age, I resolved to give myself up to Him and the service of his Church, if ever I was fit for it; but the corruption which is in the world, and that which was in my heart, soon weakened, if not erased those first

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characters

characters that Grace had wrote upon my heart. However, I went through my studies with a design of going into Orders, but afterwards upon serious reflections, feeling I was unequal for so great a burden, and disgusted by the necessity I should be under to subscribe to the doctrine of Predestination*, I yielded to the desire of my friends who would have me go into the army; but just before I quite engaged into a military employment I met with such disappointments as occasioned my coming to England. Here I was called outwardly three times to go into Orders; but upon praying to God that if those Calls were not from Him they might come to nothing, something always blasted the designs of my friends, in which I have often admired the goodness of God, who has so many times hindered me from rushing into that important employment as a horse does into the battle: but I was never more thankful for this favour than since I heard the Gospel preached in its purity. Before I had been afraid, but then I trembled to meddle with Holy Things, and resolved to work out my salvation privately, without engaging into a way of life which required so much more grace and gifts than I was conscious to have: but yet from time to time I felt warm and strong desires to cast myself and all my inability upon the Lord, if I should be called any more, as knowing that he could help me and show his strength in my weakness; and from time to time those desires were encreased by some little successes that attended my exhortations and letters to my friends.

I think

* All the Protestant Divines in Switzerland must do this.

I think it necessary to let you know, Sir, my Patron often desired me to take Orders, and said that he would soon help me to a Living; to which I coldly answered, I was not fit, and that besides I did not know how to get a title. The thing was in that state when about six weeks ago a Gentleman I hardly knew, offered me a Living which in all probability will be vacant very soon; and a Clergyman that I never spoke to, gave me of his own accord, the title of Curate to one of his Livings. Now, Sir, the question which I beg you to decide is; whether I must and can make use of that title to try to go into Orders? For as for the Living, were it vacant, I have no mind to it, because I think I could preach with more fruit in my country and in my own tongue. I am in suspense: for on the one side my heart tells me I must try, and it tells me so whenever I feel any degree of the Love of God and man: but on the other, when I examine whether I am fit for it, I so plainly see my want of gifts, and especially of that soul of all the labours of a Minister of the Gospel, Love, continual, universal, flaming Love, that my confidence disappears, I accuse myself of pride, to dare to entertain the desire of supporting one day the Ark of the Lord, and I conclude that an extraordinary punishment will sooner or latter overtake my rashness. As I am in both these frames successively, I must own Sir, I do not see plainly which of the two ways before me I can take with safety, and I shall be glad to be ruled by you, because I trust God will direct you in giving me the advice you think will best conduce to his glory, the only thing I would have in view in this affair. I know how preci-

cious is your time, I desire no long answer, *persist* or *forbear* will satisfy and influence,

Sir,

Your unworthy Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.

L E T T E R II.

(*To the same.*)

London, May 26, 1757.

Rev. Sir,

IF I did not write to you before Mrs. Wesley had asked me, 'tis not that I wanted a remembrancer within, but rather an encourager without. There is generally upon my heart such a sense of my unworthiness, that I dare hardly open my mouth before a child of God sometimes, and think it is an unspeakable honour to stand before one who has recovered something of the image of God, or sincerely seeks after it. It is possible that such a sinful worm as me should have the privilege to converse with one, whose soul is besprinkled with the blood of my Lord? The thought amazes—confounds me, and fills my eyes with tears of humble joy. Judge then at what distance I must see myself from you, if
I am

I am so much below the least of your children; and whether a remembrancer within suffices to make me presume to write to one, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. I rejoice that you find every where an increase of praying souls. I doubt not but the prayer of the just has great power with God; but I cannot believe that it should hinder the fulfilling of Christ's gracious promises to his Church. He must and will certainly come at the time appointed, for he is not slack as some men count slackness; and though he would have all come to repentance, yet he has not forgot to be true and just. Only he will come with more mercy, and will increase the light that shall be at evening-tide, according to his promise in Zech. xiv. 7. I should rather think that the visions are not yet plainly disclosed, and that the day and year in which the Lord will begin to make bare his arm openly, is still concealed from us. I must say concerning Mr. Wallis, as he said once to me, concerning God, I wish I could attend him every where as Elifha attended Elias. But since the will of God calls me from him, I must submit and drink the cup prepared for me. I have not seen him, unless for a few moments, three or four times before divine service. We must meet at the throne of grace, or meet but seldom. O when will the communion of saints be compleat? Lord hasten the time, and let me have a place among them that love thee, and love one another in sincerity!

I set out in two days for the country. O may I be faithful! Harmless like a dove, wise like a serpent, and bold as a lion for the common cause! O Lord do not forsake me! Stand

by the weakest of thy servants and enable thy children to bear with me, and wrestle with thee in my behalf! O bear with me, dear Sir, and give me your blessing every day, and the Lord will return to you sevenfold,

I am,

Rev. Sir,

Your unworthy Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.

L E T T E R I I I .

To Miss F—, and Miss R—

October 1, 1759.

Dear Sisters,

I Have been putting off writing to you, lest the action of writing should divert my Soul from the awful and delightful worship it is engaged in. But I now conclude I shall be no loser, if I invite you to love Him my soul loveth, to dread Him my soul dreadeth, to adore Him my soul adoreth! Sink with me, or rather let me sink with you, before the Throne of Grace; and while Cherubims veil their faces, and cry out in tender fear and exquisite trembling, Holy! holy! holy! let us put our mouths in the dust, and
echo

echo back the solemn sound, Holy ! holy ! holy. Let us plunge ourselves in that ocean of purity. Let us try to fathom the depths of divine mercy ; and convinced of the impossibility of such an attempt, let us lose ourselves in them. Let us be comprehended by God, if we cannot comprehend him. Let us be supremely happy in God. Let the intenseness of our happiness border upon misery, because we can make him no return. Let our head become waters, and our eyes a fountain of *tears—tears* of humble repentance, of solemn joy, of silent admiration, of exalted adoration, of raptured desires, of inflamed transports, of speechless awe ! My God and my all !—Your God and your all ! Our God and our all ! Praise him ; and with our souls blended into one by divine love, *let us with one mouth glorify the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; our Father, who is over all, through all and in us all.* I charge you before the Lord Jesus who *giveth life and more abundant life* : I intreat by all the actings of faith, the stretchings of hope, the flames of love you have ever felt, sink to greater depths of self-abasing repentance, rise to greater heights of Christ exalting joy. And let him who *is able to do exceeding abundantly more than you can ask or think*, carry on, and fulfil in you the *work of faith with power ; with that power whereby he subdueth all things unto himself.* Be steadfast in hope, unmoveable in patience and love, always abounding in the outward and inward labour of love, and receive the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

I am, dear Sisters,

Your real Well-wisher,

JOHN FLETCHER.

L E T T E R I V.

Bath, Oct. 30, 1765.

To those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in or about MADELEY, Peace be multiplied to you from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, through the operations of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

BY the help of divine providence, and the assistance of your prayers, I came safe hither last Saturday se'nnight. I was, and am still a good deal weighed down under the sense of my insufficiency to preach the unspeakable riches of Christ to poor dying souls. This place is the seat of satan's gaudy throne: the Lord hath nevertheless a few names here, that are not ashamed of him, and of whom he is not ashamed, both among the poor and among the rich. There are not many of the last, though blessed be God for any one! 'tis a great miracle if one camel passes through the eye of a needle; or, in other words, if one rich person enters into the kingdom of God. I thank God that none of you are rich in the things of this world. You are freed from a dreadful snare, even from Dives's portion in this world. May you know the happiness attending your state! It is a mercy to be drove to the throne of grace even by bodily want, and to live in dependance on divine mercy even for a morsel of bread.

I have

I have been sowing the seed that the Lord hath given both in Bath and Bristol, and I hope your prayers have not been lost upon me as a minister; for though I have not been able to discharge my office as I would, the Lord hath in some measure stood by me, and over-ruled my foolishness and helplessness. I am much supported by the thought that you bear me upon your hearts, and that when you come to the throne of grace to beg a blessing for me in the name of Jesus, the Lord doth in no wise cast you out. With regard to the state of my soul, I find, blessed be God, that as my day is, so is my strength to travel on, without minding much either good or bad report.

My absence from you answers two good ends in regard of me: I feel more my insufficiency, and the need of being daily ordained of Christ to preach his gospel; and I shall value the more the worth of my privilege with you, please God I return safely to you. I had yesterday a most advantageous offer made me of going free cost to my own country, (i. e. France,) to see my mother, brothers, and sisters in the flesh, whom I have not seen for near eighteen years; but I find my relations in the spirit are nearer and dearer to me than my relations in the flesh. I have therefore refused the kind offer, that I might return among you, and be comforted by the mutual faith of you and me.

I hope, my dear brethren that you improve much under the ministry of that faithful servant of God Mr. B——, whom Providence blesses you with. Make haste to gather the honey of knowledge and grace as it drops from his lips, and may I find the hive of your heart so full of
it

it at my return, that I may share with you in the heavenly store. In order to this, intreat the Lord to stir up your hunger and thirst after Jesus' flesh and blood, and to increase your desire for the sincere milk of the word. When people are hungry they will find time to go to their meals; and a good appetite doth not think that a meal a day is too much. As you go to spiritual meals forget not to pray all the way, and to feast your souls in hopes of hearing some good news from heaven, and from Jesus, the faithful loving friend which you have there; and when you return home, be sure to carry the unsearchable riches of Jesus's dying and rising love to your houses, in the vessel of a believing heart. Let light be attended with warmth of love. Be not you satisfied in knowing the way to heaven, but walk in it immediately, constantly, and joyfully. Be all thoroughly in earnest. You may impose upon your brethren by a formal attendance on the means of grace, but you cannot deceive the searcher of hearts. Let him then see your heart struggling towards him, and if you fall through heaviness, sloth, or unbelief, do not you make a bad matter worse by continuing hopeless in the ditch of sin and guilt. Up and away to the fountain of Jesus' blood, it will not only wash away the guilt of past sins, but strengthen you to trample all iniquity under foot for the time to come. Never forget that the soul of the diligent shall be made fat, and that the Lord will spue the lukewarm out of his mouth. Get therefore that love which makes you diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

You know the way to get this love is, 1st. To consider the mercy of God; 2dly, to be frequently,

quently, if not continually, plying this faith with all the attention of your minds, and fervour of your hearts, " Lord, I am lost, but Christ hath died!" 3dly, to try actually to love as you can, by setting your affections on Christ whom you see not, and for his sake, on your brethren whom you see; 4thly, to use much private prayer for yourselves and others, and to try to keep up communion with God, and with your absent brethren.

I beg, in order to this, that you will not neglect the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is; and when you meet in society, be neither backward nor forward to speak; esteem yourselves every one the meanest in the company, be glad to sit at the feet of the lowest. If you are tempted against any one, yield not to the temptation, and pray for much of that love which hopeth all things, and puts the best constructions even upon the worst of things. I beg for Christ's sake I may find no division and no offence among you at my return. If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem the others better than himself. I earnestly beg the continuance of your prayers for me, both as a minister, and as your companion in tribulation; as in particular, that the Lord would keep me from hurting his cause in these parts, and that when Providence shall bring me back among you, which I hope will be this day fortnight, I may be thoroughly furnished
for

for every good word and work, That the blessing of God in Christ Jesus, may crown all your hearts and your meetings, is the earnest prayer of, my very dear brethren,

Your unworthy servant in the gospel
of our common Lord,

JOHN FLETCHER.

P. S. I had not time to finish this letter yesterday, being called upon to preach in a market town in the neighbourhood. The dragon shewed some of his spite and venom to little purpose. A gentleman church-warden would hinder my getting into the pulpit; and in order to this, cursed and swore, and took another gentleman by the collar in the middle of the church. Notwithstanding his rage, I preached; may the Lord raise in power, what was sown in weakness!

L E T T E R V.

Oakhall, Suffex, Sept. 23, 1766.

To those who love or fear the Lord Jesus at MADELEY, grace, peace, and love, be multiplied unto you, from our God and Saviour Jesus Christ!

PROVIDENCE, my dear brethren, called me so suddenly from among you, that I had no time to take my leave of you, and recommend myself to your prayers. But I hope the good spirit

spirit of our God, which is a spirit of love and supplication, hath brought me to your remembrance as the poorest and weakest of Christ's ministers, and consequently as him whose hands stand most in need of being strengthened and lifted up by your prayers. Pray on then for yourselves, for one another, and for him whose glory is to minister unto you in spiritual things, and whose sorrow it is not to do it in a manner more suitable to the majesty of the gospel, and more profitable to your souls. My heart is with you, nevertheless I bear patiently this bodily separation for three reasons.

I. The variety of more faithful and abler ministers which you have during my absence, is more likely to be serviceable to you than my presence among you, and I would always prefer your profit to my satisfaction.

II. I hope Providence will give me those opportunities of conversing and praying with a greater variety of experienced christians, which will tend to mine own improvement, and I trust in the end, to yours.

III. I flatter myself, that after some weeks absence, my ministry will be recommended by the advantage of novelty, which (the more the pity) goes farther with some than the word itself. In the mean time, I shall give you some advice, which it may be, will prove both suitable and serviceable to you.

1. ENDEAVOUR to improve daily under the ministry that Providence blesses you with. Be careful to attend it with diligence, faith, and prayer. Would it not be a great shame, if when ministers come thirty or forty miles off to offer you

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peace

peace and pardon, strength and comfort, in the name of God, any of you should slight the glorious message, or hear it as if it was nothing to you, and as if you heard it not? See then, that you never come from a sermon, without being more deeply convinced of sin and righteousness. In order to this,

2. Use much prayer before you go to church. Consider that your next appearance there, may be in a coffin; and intreat the Lord to give you now so to hunger and thirst after righteousness, that you may be filled therewith. Hungry people never go fasting from a feast. Call to mind the text I preached from the last Sunday but one, before I left you. *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envies, and all evil-speaking; as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,* 1 Pet. 2. 1

3. When you are under the word, beware of sitting as judges, and not like criminals. Many judge of the manner, matter, voice or person of the preacher. You perhaps judge all the congregation, when you should judge yourselves guilty of eternal death, and yet worthy of eternal life, through the worthiness of him, who stood and was condemned at Pilate's bar for you. The moment you have done crying to God as guilty, or thanking Christ as reprieved criminals, you have reason to conclude, that this advice is levelled at you.

4. When you have been at a means of grace, and do not find yourselves sensibly quickened, let it be matter of deep humiliation to you. For want of repenting of their unbelief, and hardness of heart, some get into a habit of deadness and indolence, so that they come to be as insensible, and

and as little ashamed of themselves for it, as stones.

5. Beware of the inconsistent behaviour of those, who complain that they are full of wandering in the evening under the word, when they have suffered their minds to wander from Christ all the day long. O! get acquainted with him, that you may walk in him, and with him. Whatsoever you do or say, especially in the things of God, do or say it, as if Christ was before, behind, and on each side of you. Indeed he is so, whether you consider it or not; for when he visibly appeared on earth, he called himself the Son of Man which is in heaven; how much more then is he present on earth, now, that he makes his immediate appearance in heaven? Make conscience then, to maintain a sense of his blessed presence all the day long, and all the day long you will have a continual feast; for can you conceive any thing more delightful, than to be always at the fountain of love, peace, beauty and joy; at the spring of power, wisdom, goodness and truth? Can there be a purer, and more melting happiness, than to be with the best of fathers, the kindest of brothers, the most generous of benefactors, and the tenderest of husbands? Now Jesus is all this, and much more to the believing soul. O! believe my friends, believe in Jesus now, through a continual now; and untill you find you can thus believe, mourn over your unbelieving heart; drag it to him as you can; think of the efficacy of his blood shed for the ungodly, and wait for the Spirit of faith from on high.

6. Some of you wonder why you cant believe; why you cannot see Jesus with the eye of your mind, and delight in him with the affections of

your heart. I apprehend the reason to be one of these, or perhaps altogether.

I. You are not poor, lost, undone, helpless, despairing sinners in yourselves. You indulge spiritual and refined self-righteousness; you are not yet dead to the law, and quite slain by the commandment. Now the kingdom of heaven belongs to none but the poor in spirit; Jesus came to save none but the lost. What wonder then, if Jesus is little to you, and if you do not live in his kingdom of peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost?

II. Perhaps you spend your time in curious reasonings, instead of casting yourselves as forlorn sinners at Christ's feet, leaving it to him to bless you, when, and in the manner and degree he pleases. Know that he is the wise and sovereign God, and that it is your duty to lie before him as clay, as fools, as sinful nothings.

III. Perhaps also, some of you wilfully keep idols of one kind or other: you indulge some sin against light and knowledge, and it is neither matter of humiliation nor confession to you. The love of praise, that of the world, that of money, and that of sensual gratifications, when not lamented, are as implacable enemies to Christ, as Judas and Herod. How can ye believe, seeing ye seek the honour that cometh from men? Hew then your Agags in pieces before the Lord; run from your Delliabs to Jesus resolutely; cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye that offends you: "Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you." Nevertheless, when you strive, take care not to make yourself a righteousness of your striving; remember

ber that justifying righteousness is finished and brought in, and that your goodness can no more add to it than your sins diminish it. Shout then "the Lord your righteousness;" and if you are undone sinners, humbly and yet boldly say, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

7. When I was in London, I endeavoured to make the best of my time; that is to say, to hear, receive, and practice the word. Accordingly, I went to Mr. Whitfield's tabernacle, and heard him give his society a most sweet exhortation upon love. He began by observing that when the apostle St. John was old, and past walking and preaching, he would not forsake the assembling himself with the brethren, as the manner of too many is upon little or no pretences at all. On the contrary, he got himself carried to their meeting, and with his last thread of voice, preached to them his final sermon made up of this one sentence, "My little children love one another." I wish, I pray, I earnestly beseech you to follow that evangelical, apostolical advice; and till God makes you all little children, little in your own eyes, and simple as little children; give me leave to say, my dear brethren, love one another, and of course, judge not, provoke not, be not shy of one another, but bear ye one another's burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; yea, bear with one another's infirmities, and do not easily cast off any one, no not for sin, except it be obstinately persisted in.

My sheet is full, and so is my heart of good wishes for, and strong longing after you all. I have just room to tell you, I hope to be with you in three or four weeks time. O let me have the comfort of finding you all believing and loving

loving. Farewell, my dear brethren ! The blessing of God be with you all; this is the earnest desire of,

Your unworthy minister,

JOHN FLETCHER.

L E T T E R VI.

To the Methodist Society at Dublin.

Madeley, March, 1772.

My dear Brethren,

MERCY and love be multiplied unto you, from Him who was and is to come, the Almighty ! I should have acknowledged before the favour of two letters you honoured me with, if I had not conveyed my thanks to you immediately by means of brother Morgan. But thanks at second-hand, do not satisfy my gratitude; permit me therefore to present them, if not in person, at least by some grateful lines personally written.

I am much obliged to those of you, who approve of my little attempt to vindicate practical religion, and the character of an eminent servant of Christ, who ministered unto you in holy things, which some of our mistaken friends in England exposed as the author of dreadful heresy. The thanks which some of you unexpectedly bestowed upon me on that occasion, I have laid at the feet of Jesus, to whom all
praise

praise belongs, who is the author of every good gift, and from whom comes all the help done upon the earth.

When I took up my pen, I aimed at discharging my duty towards God, and his misapprehended truth; towards my honoured father in Christ, Mr. Wesley, and his misunderstood minutes; and though all the world should have blamed me, they would never have robbed me of the satisfaction of having at least attempted to clear my conscience.

The manner in which part of you have refused me their thanks, is too civil and brotherly, not to deserve mine. I wish many of our English brethren had been so moderate as you, in their disapprobation of my letters to the Rev. Mr. Shirley. You will see in a second check to Antinomianism, some things that may reconcile you to the first, and I have just sent to the press, a third check, to what appears to me the favourite delusion of the church; which will I trust cast more light on the delicate subject about which we divide.

If we cannot see things in the same light, I hope we never shall, I beg we never may, disagree in love.—

I am glad you agreed to disagree about the giving or refusing me your undeserved thanks. Let every little rub of opposition, heighten our love; every little clashing of sentiment, make the heavenly spark shew itself, kindle our souls into that charity, which hopeth all things, endureth all things, thinketh no evil, and is not provoked.

If I have been obliged to bear a little hard upon my dear honoured brother Mr. Shirley, I beg that
nothing

nothing I have written to him, on account of his precipitancy, rashness, or hurry, may prevent you from looking upon him with the love and respect due to a minister of Christ. Recommending him and myself to your prayers, and taking the liberty to recommend to you, mutual forbearance, a daily increase of brotherly love, and a continual growth in the genuine liberty of the gospel,

I remain, my dear Brethren,

Your obliged, affectionate, and obedient brother

and Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.

L E T T E R VII.

To Mr. HENRY BROOKE.

Madeley, 6th Sept. 1772.

Dear Sir,

IF to do, was as present with me as to wish, you would have been half ruined in postages. I cannot tell you how often I have thought of thanking you for your kind letter. My controversy made me put it off for some time, and when I was going one day to answer you, a clergyman called upon me, read your letter, said you was a sensible author, and if I would let him have it, he would let me have your *Fool of Quality*, of whom I had never heard.

I forgot.

I forgot to take your direction, and my backwardness to writing, had a very good excuse to indulge itself. However it ceases now : after some months my friend has sent me back your unexpected, but welcome favour. I know in what street you live, a thousand thanks for it, and a thousand more for the amiable character of your Harry, my kind, my new correspondent. May this sheet convey them warm from my heart to yours, and from thence may they return like a thousand drops into that immense ocean of goodness, truth, love and delight, whence come all the streams which gladden the universe, and ravish the city of God.

I thankfully accept the pleasure, profit, and honour of your correspondence. But I must not deceive you ; I have not yet learned the blessed precept of our Lord, in part of writing and receiving letters. I still find it more blessed to *receive* than to *give* : and till I have got out of that selfishness, never depend upon a letter from me till you see it, and be persuaded nevertheless that one from you will be always welcome.

I see by your works that you love truth, and that you will force me through all the barriers of prejudice, to embrace it in its meanest dress. That makes me love you. I hope to improve by your example and lessons. One thing I want truly to learn, that is, that creatures and visible things are but shadows, and that God is God, Jehovah, the true eternal substance. To live practically in this truth, is to live in the suburbs of heaven. Really to believe that in God we live, move, and have our being, is to find and enjoy the root of our existence ; it is to slide from self into our original principle, from the carnal into the spiritual, from the visible into the invisible, from time into eternity. Give me at your leisure, some directions how to cease from busy-
fying

syng myself about the husk of things; and how I shall break through the shell till I come to the kernel of resurrection, life, and power that lies hid from the unbelievers sight. You mention "a short sketch of your path already passed, and of your present feelings:" I believe it will be profitable to me for instruction and reproof, therefore I shall thankfully accept it.—Pray, my dear Sir, about *feelings*, are you possessed of all the feelings of your Clinton, Clement, and Harry? Are they natural to you, I mean previous to what we generally call conversation? I have often thought that some of the feelings you describe, depend a great deal upon the fineness of the nerves, and bodily organs: and as I am rather of a Stoic turn, I have sometimes comforted myself in thinking, that my want of feelings might in a degree proceed from the dulness of Swiss nerves. If I am mistaken, Providence directs me to you to have that important question solved. May not some persons have as much true faith, love, humanity, and pity, as others who are ten times more affected, for a time at least? And what directions would you give to a christian Stoic, if these two ideas are not absolutely incompatible? My Stoicism helps me I think calmly to weather out a storm of displeasure, which my little pamphlets have raised against me. How shall I distinguish Stoicism from profound resignation to the will of God? You see I at once consult you as an old friend, and spiritual casuist; nor know I how to testify better to you, how unreservedly I begin to be,

My very dear Friend

Yours in the Lord,

JOHN FLETCHER.

I hope our dear brother Morgan enjoys a better state of health, and that you take sweet counsel together.

ther. Give him my love, and that of my Moravian countryman, Sulgar. I am going this week to Bristol, and hope to be back in less than a month.

The pious Author, when he wrote the above, mistook Mr. Henry Brooke jun. for Mr. Henry Brooke sen. the Author of the Fool of Quality.

L E T T E R VIII.

To the REV. MR. WESLEY.

Madeley, June 6th 1781.

Rev. and dear Sir,

I Rejoice to hear that your spiritual bow abides in strength. I would have wished you joy about it since my arrival, if I knew where a letter could overtake you. I heartily thank you about the directions you give me to hinder my bow, so far split, from breaking quite. Now I must imitate your prudence, or the opportunity of doing it will soon be lost for good.

I would do something in the Lord's vineyard, but I have no strength. I can hardly, without overdoing myself, visit the sick of my parish. I was better when I left Switzerland, than I am now; I had a great pull back in venturing to preach in the fields, in the Cevennes,* to about two thousand French

* Mountains of France, in Languedoc, remarkable for the frequent meetings of the Protestants, as a place of security against the tyranny of their Roman Catholic governors.

French Protestants. I rode thirty miles to that place from Montpellier, on horse-back, but was obliged to be brought back in a carriage. And now that I am here I can neither serve my Church nor get it properly served. Mr. G—s owns, the place is not fit for him, nor he for it. He will go when I can get some body to help me. Could you spare me brother B——? It would be a charity. Unless I can get a curate zealous enough to stir among the people, I will give up the place: it would be little comfort to me to stay here to see the dead bury the dead. I thank God however, for resignation to his will. As soon as I shall discern it clearly, I shall follow it; for I trust I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. What a blessing is Christ to the soul, and health to the body! When you go to, or come from the conference, be so good as to remember that you have now a pilgrim's house in the way from Shrewsbury to Broseley; and do not go and climb our hills without baiting. At our first interview, I shall ask your thoughts about a French Work or two I have upon the anvil; but which I fear I shall not have time to finish. Be that as it will, God needs not the hand of Uzzah, nor my finger, to keep up his ark. I read with pleasure and edification, your Arminian Magazine. Your store-house is inexhaustible. The Lord strengthen you to *Nestor's* years; or rather, to the useful length of *St. John's* life. It is worth living to serve the church, and to teach Christians to love one another.

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Your affectionate, though unprofitable Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.

LETTER

L E T T E R IX.

*To the same.**Madeley, June 24th, 1781.*

Rev. and dear Sir,

AS to Miss L——, I believe her to be a simple, holy follower of the Lord. Nothing throws *unscriptural* Mysticism down like holding out the promise of the Father, and the fulness of the Spirit, to be received *now, by faith*, in the two Promisers, the *Father* and the *Son*. Ah! what is the *penal fire* of the Mystics, to the *burning love* of the *Spirit*, revealing the glorious power of the *Father* and the *Son*, according to John xiv. 26, and filling us with all the fulness God? Plain Scripture is better than all Mystic refinements.

When I was at N——, near Geneva, three Ministers received the Word, and preached the Truth. When persecution arose because of the Word, the two Pastors were afraid; but the Curate of the first Pastor, a Burgess of the town, stood by me. This Timothy opened his house, when the Pastors shut both their Pulpits and houses; and I heard him preach a Discourse before I came away, worthy of you, Sir, upon the heights and depths of holiness. He wrote an apology for me, which he sent to the head of the persecuting Clergy, and so stopped the torrent of wrath. He made observations upon

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the mischief done Christianity by a bad Clergy, such as George Fox, and you, Sir, would not disown. When I told him of you and the Methodists, he expressed a great desire to come to England, to hear you, to see the English brethren, and to learn English, that he might read your Works, and perhaps translate some of them. He can have no Living in his own country, because he will not swear to persecute all who propagate Arminian Tenets: which is more honest than the Clergy, many of whom are Arians, Socinians or Deists, and do not scruple to take the Calvinian Oaths! I shall endeavour to wait upon you at Leeds at the time of the Conference: in the mean time,

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

And affectionate Son in the Gospel,

JOHN FLETCHER.

L E T T E R X.

Madeley, 20th April, 1782.

Dear Sir,

LAST Saturday I received your kind invitation to take a journey to Dublin, with my wife, and we join in sincere thanks for the kind and generous offers, which accompany that invitation. Two reasons, at this time, concur to make me postpone

pone the accepting of it: for, not to mention my weak state of health, I have been so long absent from my parish, that my parishioners have a just claim to my stated labours *for some time*; and Mr. B—, my curate, being wanted at Kingwood School, I must serve my own church myself; and the duty is so continual, that I dare not go twenty miles from home, much less to a neighbouring kingdom. Providence may, if it be for the glory of God, make a way for me to go, and return my thanks in person. In the mean time, I beg you, Sir, to present them to all our brethren who set their hands to your kind letter. If I took you, Sir, for the author of the Fool of Quality, I thought I saw his style in the style of your letter; however, I was not much mistaken, your pen is as nearly allied to his, as your blood to his. May one Spirit, the humble, loving spirit of Jesus, make us all of one heart and soul! May we, notwithstanding the channel that separates our bodies, rejoice that one truth unites our souls; and that the common faith and love, make us join daily in Christ our common Head! so prays,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate, obliged brother,

and Servant,

JOHN FLETCHER.

L E T T E R X I.

Nov, 13, 1783.

DEAR Mrs. B—— has within these few days much lain on my mind; in particular yesterday at ten o'clock, as I was at prayer, I remembered your sore trial; the blessing you got at the Gravel Walk, and an expression you once used to me in your garden,—which was, "*O I love the cross.*" As these thoughts passed through my mind, I lifted up my heart with desire in your behalf, and felt a union very close and particular with your spirit; and if much land and the great water were not between us, it would rejoice me now and then to take sweet counsel with you and dear brother B——. Indeed both my dear and me were peculiarly united in spirit with you both, and we truly sympathize with you in your present affliction, from the hurt Mrs. S—— informs us Mr. B—— has got on his leg. O may every trial unite you more closely to your divine, glorified, but once crucified Head! To me you appear one whom the Lord hath chosen in the furnace; one of his favoured ones, who hath the honour to bear that mark of his sheep. O may all his will be accomplished in us both, and all the work of faith with power! I am bound to thank you my dear, for the present you made me of Lady Guion's Life. I am reading it through to my husband, and I think never did I find greater unction in it. O may her sweet spirit of humble

ble love be ours! It is a book I dearly love, and the better because the gift of my dear Sister to her unworthy friend,

MARY FLETCHER.

John Fletcher sends kindest thanks and most cordial love to dear brother B—, for all the love he has shewed him and his partner. We have sorrowed together: O let us hope, yea rejoice in hope together—in hope of the glory of God, reserved both for our souls and bodies, for ourselves and the church. The salvation by faith in what Christ has done, and by hope in what he has promised to do, certainly belongs to us till we are saved by the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost into all the life of God. Help me, dear Brother, to look up with a stedfast eye to the centre of our life, to the fountain of our power. As my wife was reading to me the account of Madam Guion gives of her communion with absent friends, I experienced it for and with you. Let us be more united with the Head, and we shall be so with the members. The Lord repay your patient love towards us, repay your gifts to us, and give you a double portion in the truth and love which breathe in St. Paul's Epistles. My love to your other self,

JOHN FLETCHER.

L E T T E R XII.

To MRS. D—.

AND was my dear brother and sister D—, pleased by the receipt of a letter from such an unworthy worm? Oh that I could convey some word from the mouth of my adorable Lord to your hearts. Oh that he would permit me, his poor creature, to drop a sentence that might prove some encouragement to my dear friends in their way. You ask shall I hope ever to attain the clean heart, and walk in purity while here below? Why not.—Abraham hoped against hope, and there sprang from him as good as dead, a posterity as the stars of heaven for multitude. Does unbelief say thou art dead; thou hast outstayed the day: it is all over? Then arise out of the dust, rouse up all your powers, *against hope believe in hope*, and by faith receive strength to apprehend all the fulness of God. Remember Christ is in your faith,—hold *faith* and you hold *Christ*. If you know not how to get hold on faith, remember faith is in the promise, seek out for a promise, and get *hold there*. But if you cry out, I see the links of the chain so far, but alas! I cannot get hold of the promise: I don't know which is for me: I cannot reach so far?—Well don't faint yet, here is another link lower still, that is to say, *thy wants*. Can you be sure there is any wound within, are you certain you are a sinner? Well then reach your hand
hither.—

hither.—I came not to call the righteous, but sinners!—Are you a helpless sinner?—To them who have no might he increaseth strength—Are you an ungrateful, backsliding, adulterous sinner? Hear him saying, “Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, but return unto me, saith the Lord.”—And if you doubt whether you may believe for a *great measure of holiness*: whether your soul (already in old age and barren) shall believe for abundant fruitfulness? Answer yourself, my dear friend, from that word, “Who so will let him take of the water of life freely,” and he that believeth on me, out of his soul (which hath digested the word of God) shall flow rivers of living water. I have just told Mrs. S— thus, of one of our sisters here a deeper unbeliever than you, but now quite full of God; I refer you to her letter. Much haste made me short and rambling. O my God, in mercy let thy power rest on thy dear servant! Convey even by this poor scrawl some power to their hearts. some fresh light into the mighty chain which begins with *man’s wickedness*, hangs on God’s mercy in the promise; *faith’s victory* springing therefrom, and Christ’s fulness becoming all in all. We pray the God of love to be with *your* children, and all who meet with them. Tell sister H— to keep hold of the chain, it shall draw her into the holy of holies. And with our kindest and most grateful remembrance of you both, we remain,

Your sincere,

but unworthy friends,

JOHN and MARY FLETCHER.

My dear’s face has been quite well a good while, and myself better than when in Dublin. But we are oft put in mind of our endless home, and he each night sleeps as if we were to wake no more. I think he scarce ever omits *that observation*.

L E T T E R XIII.

To MR. H— B—

Madeley, April 27, 1784.

My dear Brother,

MERCY, peace, and perfect love attend you, your dear partner, and the dear friends who live under your roof, and with whom I beg you may abide under the cross, till with John, Mary, and Salomé, &c. you *all* can say, We are crucified with Him, and the life we now live, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. You are certainly in the right, when you prefer the *inward* to the *outward*. The former is the *safer*, but *both together* make up the beauty of holiness. The inward may be compared to the husband, the outward to the fruitful wife : What God hath joined together, let no man, no angel transformed into light, put asunder.

With respect to the glory of the Lord, *it is at hand* ; whatever false wisdom and unbelief may whisper to our hearts. It can be no farther off than the presence of Him, who *fills all in all*.
Our

Our wrong notions of things are a main hinderance to our *slipping* into it. Perhaps also our minding more the cherubim of glory, than the plain tables, and the manna hid in the ark. There is a passing (as Bromley said) from the *outward* to the *inward*, and from the INWARD to the INMOST ; and it is only from the inmost that we can see the Lord's *spiritual* glory.

Pray, my dear Brother, when you are so fixed in the *inmost*, as not to lose sight of Him who dwells both in *light* and in the *thick darkness*, let me share in your joy. Love will make me partake of your happiness. With respect to what you say of the kingdom, not coming with the outward pomp, which is observable by the men of the world, it is strictly true. But that there is an *inward* display of *power* and *glory* under pentecostal christianity, is undeniable, both from our Lord's *promises* to his imperfect disciples, and from their *experiences* after the kingdom was come to them with power.

It is sometimes suggested to me, that as the apostacy hath chiefly consisted in the going after the *pomp* of the whore of Babylon, so while the woman, who fled into the wilderness, remains there as a widow, she *must*, be deprived even of those *true* ornaments, and of that *spiritual* glory, which was bestowed upon her on the day of Pentecost, the day of her espousals. But I do not close in with the suggestion, as I am not *sure* that it cannot come from Satan transformed into an angel of light, to rob me of a bright jewel of my christian hope. To wait in deep resignation, and with a constant attention to what the Lord will please to do or say concerning us, and his church ; and to leave to him *the times and seasons*,
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is what I am chiefly called to do; taking care to avoid falling into either ditch, I mean into the *speculation* careless of *action*, or into the *activity* which is devoid of spirituality. I *would* not have a lamp without oil; and I *could* not have oil without a lamp, and a vessel to hold it in for myself, and to communicate it to others.

I thank you, my dear friend, for the parcel of books you have sent me. I read with pleasure Ramsay's Theological Works, which were quite unknown to me. My good wishes attend both your brothers. Fare you all well in Christ.

So prays

JOHN FLETCHER.

P. S. Pray remember me to brother P—— and D——.



HEADS

H E A D S
O F
SELF-EXAMINATION,
BY THE
REV. MR. FLETCHER.

1st. **D**ID I awake spiritual, and was I watchful in keeping my mind from wandering this morning when I was rising?

2d. Have I this day got nearer to God in times of prayer, or have I given way to a lazy, idle spirit?

3d. Has my faith been weakened by unwatchfulness, or quickened by diligence this day?

4th. Have I this day walked by faith, and eyed God in all things?

5th. Have I denied myself in all unkind words and thoughts; have I delighted in seeing others preferred before me, and can I lay my hand upon my heart, and say,

“ That mercy I to others shew,
“ That mercy shew to me ?”

6th.

6th. Have I made the most of my precious time, as far as I had light, strength, and opportunity?

7th. Have I kept the issues of my heart in the means of grace, so as to profit by them?

8th. What have I done this day for the souls and bodies of God's dear saints?

9th. Have I laid out any thing to please myself, when I might have saved the money for the cause of God?

10th. Have I governed well my tongue this day, remembering that "in a multitude of words there wanteth not sin?"

11th. In how many instances have I denied myself this day?

12th. Does my life and conversation adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ?



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